

Daniel Putnam

AN

ADDRESS,

DELIVERED IN THE

BRICK MEETING HOUSE, IN DANVERS,

BEFORE THE SOCIETY IN THAT TOWN FOR

SUPPRESSING INTEMPERANCE

AND

OTHER VICES;

AND FOR

PROMOTING TEMPERANCE

AND

GENERAL MORALITY;

APRIL 25, 1820.

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ADDRESS.

VICE has been a prominent trait in the human character, from the first history we have of man, down to the present time. There is no nation, or body of men, of whom we have any knowledge, but have mixed with their virtues more or less of this alloy.

How sin was introduced into the world, has perplexed the minds of the wisest and best of mankind. Solomon, the wise king of Israel, came to this conclusion : that “ God made man upright, but he hath sought out many inventions.”

But the discussion of a subject, that has been productive of so many and various speculations, would not be proper at this time. The sin that particularly attracts our attention on this occasion, is that of **INTEMPERANCE** ; which threatens, in its progress, to deluge our country with ruin and disgrace. Unused to declamation in public, it is with no small degree of diffidence, that I attempt it on a subject that requires so much delicacy in its management. Knowing that it has been so ably and ingeniously examined by those who have preceded me, I am aware that what I can say, will be of small consideration. Besides, when it is considered, with what force of argument, elegance of style, and correctness of sentiment, discourses are weekly delivered from this sacred desk, I cannot but feel how ill qualified I am to speak at this time. With these preliminary observations, I will attempt to suggest a few hints appropriate to the occasion for which we are assembled.

Let us then in the first place examine some of the pernicious effects, that result from the vice of Intemperance. These are numerous ; such as loss of health, property and confidence. We may likewise consider that this vice is introductory to family discord ; that it weakens the strength of a nation ; in some it impairs, in others totally obliterates, religion in the heart. In the next place, a number of arguments will be used, to persuade all the sober and steady part of the community to join their efforts with ours, in checking this increasing evil. In conclusion, such observations will be made, as will naturally arise from a review of the subject.

Ardent spirit is an insidious, but sure poison, that sooner or later impairs the health, and is destructive of the life of those who are too indulgent in its use. The human stomach requires, in order to perform its offices in the best and most vigorous manner, the most simple and least irritating substances, whether of solids or liquids. Pure water, milk, beer, cider and wine, as liquids ; meat of various kinds, with vegetable substances of an innocent nature, as solids, probably constitute that kind of diet, which is best calculated to support life, and promote health in its greatest perfection. The man, whose plan of diet approaches the nearest to this simple course, will (all other things being equal) be most likely to live a long, happy and contented life. On the contrary, he who departs most from it, will live the shortest life, and enjoy it the least. But it is not expected, however ardently to be wished, that many persons, if any (in the present state of society) will live up to these pure and patriarchal rules. There are many articles of diet, that are not included in those abovementioned, that are used by the most sober and temperate part of the community, as well as by those of a contrary character, the effects of which are more or less pernicious, as they approach nearer in their qualities to that worst of all artificial stimu-

lants, ardent spirit. Some of those which are of common use, among all ranks and characters, are coffee, tea, spices of almost all kinds, with various cordials and condiments ; which in their nature are more or less injurious, in proportion to their stimulating powers. But there are few, however humble or elevated their situation, that are not in the free use of these articles of diet. There is no man who would not think his privileges were curtailed, if he were deprived of these luxuries. It is refining *too* much, it is being *too* rigid, to attempt to deprive the community of these dainties. Such are the habits and customs of society, at the present time, that it is in vain to strive to bring about a reformation in these respects ; yet, according to the principle before laid down, they are destructive of health, and diminish enjoyments ; but habit and custom have made them so necessary, and they are so incorporated with our food, that it is futile to pretend to debar their use. It is not with common stimulating substances, similar to the abovementioned, that we are at war, neither with ardent spirit, when used with prudence, but, to bring our subject to a point, it is its excessive and intemperate use, that we aim mainly to check ; this we believe is destructive to health, and prematurely cuts off its victims.

How does it produce disease ? is a natural inquiry ; and what are its effects on the constitution ? Some of the ill effects which arise from its excessive use will now be enumerated.

Ardent spirit produces increased action of the heart and blood vessels, and an unnatural excitement of the nerves, more particularly those which arise from the brain ; and carries him who is under its influence into the regions of fancy and vision. In this state of mind he seems prepared to perform some mighty exploit. He is in his own imagination (according to the expressive language of scripture) “rich and increased in goods, and hath need of no-

thing ; when, in reality, he is poor, blind, miserable, and hath need of all things." His head is full of ideas, which arise in confused succession ; his words are full of "sound and song," but when uttered "signify nothing." After this undue action ceases, the whole system sinks below the standard of health, and dulness and stupidity are the consequences. To recover from this state of body and mind, he has recourse to another intoxicating draught. Thus, as respects his rational faculties, he is always either above or below the standard by which a sober man regulates his conduct.

The other mental effects, that arise from this indulgence, are delirium, loss of memory, and in many instances complete idiotism. The most shining intellects and the most highly cultivated minds, are completely destroyed by excessive indulgence. Its effects on the body are numerous. One of which is a want of tone or strength in the stomach : being unduly stimulated by frequent intoxicating draughts, it loses its power of action, and imperfectly exerts its digestive powers ; the consequences of which are a pain and faintness, accompanied with a distressing sensation and oppression, which is usually removed by adding fresh poison to that already diseased organ, which still further incapacities it to perform the offices that nature requires. In this manner its delicate coats becomes so inflamed and irritable, that it is unable to retain a quantity of food sufficient to support the demands of nature. The body becomes emaciated, the powers of nature are exhausted, and finally a lingering consumption closes the fatal career.

A particular description of the many diseases, that are the consequence of this vice, might be given ; but this would not be interesting to most of my hearers, as it would not be in my power to make it so intelligible, as other topics that might be discussed, as such an enumeration would be necessarily in-

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cumbered with the technical phraseology of the healing art. It may be observed in general, that fevers, local inflammation, dropsy, apoplexy and palsy are greatly aggravated or directly produced by intemperance. Who is there, who wishes to avoid this complication of maladies, that are destructive of the health and prematurely brings on the death of so many of the human race, but will be cautious how he indulges in habits of intemperance?

This vice is destructive of ~~those~~ *the property of* those who are its slaves. Calculations have been made on this subject, by those who have preceded me, proving that many expend more money unnecessarily, in purchasing ardent spirits, than would, if prudently used, support them and their families in decent independence. The annual sum of money expended for this unworthy purpose in the United States, (deducting what is necessary or may be used within temperate limits) is more than sufficient to defray the expenses of government, and to do much towards supporting schools and religious instruction. Mortgages and pecuniary embarrassments are among the other evils, which in this way result from this vice, bringing those who are its votaries to penury, want and wretchedness.

This vice occasions a loss of time. While the sober and temperate are engaged in the duties of an honest occupation, the time of the idle and intemperate is worse than lost, in the company of those of his own character, where he is at the same time exposed to the tricks and knavery of rogues and sharpers, who have stronger heads, but harder hearts, than himself; who rob him of his estate, and are among the first to complete his ruin, when he can no longer be serviceable to them.

This vice is destructive of that reputation and confidence, which those enjoy who pursue a different course of conduct. Who will long associate with a man from whom he can expect nothing, but insult

and mortification—whose indecent and lewd conversation disgusts him with human nature, considering, how ridiculous man renders himself, by his vices and follies? The haunts of the intemperate are filled with scenes of riot and noise, profaneness and scurrility; where the most sacred subjects are treated with the same indecent and irreverent familiarity, as the most common and trivial. The most criminal oaths, and the most revered principles of our holy religion, are alike common in the mouths of the inebriate. To a decent, steady and respectable member of the community, one such scene would be sufficient, we should suppose, to forever deter him from these resorts of idleness and dissipation. But too many are led on by imperceptible degrees to become their degraded associates. Let the young and inexperienced, particularly, be on their guard how they mix with such debasing company.

In the domestic circle, the effects of this vice are such as to render its inmates completely wretched, wherever it prevails. Instead of that concord and happiness which result from mutual affection, when grounded in virtue and purity of thought and action, nothing remains but discord and animosity, crimination and recrimination. Instead of all those sympathies which cement kindred souls, you will find the worst and most cruel jealousies, solely arising from the corrupt state of the moral character of its members. These are the consequences, when a whole family are guilty of this vice. We have many of us seen it confined to the father of a family: when this is the case, how completely wretched are its inmates! Instead of being an example worthy of imitation to his rising offspring, he presents a most disgusting picture of poor degraded human nature in its worst form. No parent can expect that his children will long be temperate and correct in their habits, when he presents them so poor an example of those virtues. But the contrary of this often is the

case, and children become abandoned and worthless characters, in consequence of the conduct of vicious parents. But it is not his children alone who suffer; his wife is an object of the deepest commiseration. Who has not seen many a virtuous and amiable woman made most wretched and miserable, by the intemperance of her husband? The secret sighs and silent tears are known only to the unhappy sufferer; but this is apparent to us all, that many a virtuous woman has lingered out a miserable existence, or been brought prematurely to the grave, by the unkind treatment she has received from him, who was connected to her by the most tender and delicate ties. Let us view a son who ought to have been the solace and comfort of the declining years of fond and affectionate parents, forgetful of his duty, abandoned to this degrading vice. Who but parents can know the poignant anguish that is produced by the misconduct of such a child? Language is too feeble to tell their grief! They who have experienced this misfortune can alone express its force.

It always affords pleasure to an ingenuous mind, to dwell on those traits in the female character, that adorn and add loveliness to their charms. We admire that modesty of deportment, that delicacy of sentiment, and that purity of thought, which characterize most of the fair sex. We acknowledge that we are indebted to them, in a great measure, for the polish of our manners, and some of our most tender and refined sensibilities. We must grant that they as a sex are more generally correct in their habits, pure in their morals, exemplary in their deportment, than ourselves. We believe, that they have a more general regard for religion and its institutions; that their piety is more ardent, that they are more susceptible of *all* good impressions; that they are more zealously engaged in all the duties of morality and benevolence, than our own sex. But notwithstanding they in general are most richly deserving of

all that has been said, still there are instances where intemperance disfigures the female character, and renders all the charms that adorn youth and beauty disgusting and appalling to the sight. It is acknowledged that the sin of drunkenness is as criminal in the one sex as the other; but certainly it appears more detestable in a female. The instances in this vicinity are but few, where a woman is so forgetful of all feelings of decency and delicacy, as to give herself up to this vice. Would that there were none so lost to their own reputation!

This vice weakens the physical strength of a nation, and subdues that spirit of independence and liberty that is the stability of all free governments. At what time do we date the decline and fall of the ancient Romans more appropriately, than when the luxuries and effeminacies of the surrounding nations had contaminated their principles of liberty, and weakened their bodies? Soon did that invincible bravery leave them, which had enabled them to conquer the world, when these habits took place; and they became a divided and oppressed people.

The Romans are not the only nation, that have suffered from luxurious indulgencies; other nations, famed for the wisdom of their laws, and all the arts and refinements of civilized life, have been degraded and ruined by intemperance. All history is full of proof, that in proportion to the increase of vice and intemperance, has been the decline of the principles of liberty and virtue in a nation. Do we not in our own country perceive a difference in the health and vigour of the present generation, when compared with our ancestors? Are we as firm to endure fatigue and labour, cold and heat, as they were? Is our diet as simple and pure, and our wants as few and reasonable, as were our fathers? Where is that strict regard to the duties of morality, and that reverence for religion and its institutions, which so eminently distinguished them? Is there not, my fel-

low-citizens a great falling off in these respects ? I believe there is no one who will deny that we have greatly departed from that simplicity and purity of character that were so uniformly exhibited by the American patriarchs.

A most powerful and solemn reason to avoid habits of intemperance is, that in its effects it saps the foundations of religion in the heart. It is rarely the case, when men give themselves up to this vice, that it is unconnected with others, that are as degrading and unbecoming rational and accountable beings. Profaneness, sabbath-breaking, and a general neglect of religion and its institutions, are too frequently connected with it. When the rational powers of man are drowned and stupefied by intoxication, he is poorly fitted for the sublime and spiritual enjoyment, that results from the contemplation of a God of infinite purity and perfection, in whom are concentrated all those great and exalted qualities, that are calculated to excite the most devout and ardent affections, a Being, who requires of his creatures their most undivided services and adoration. But many, it is to be feared, have other objects of worship, in place of the great and prime object of all religious devotion. It would seem that the drunkard worshiped his bottle : this conclusion we are compelled to make, because all other objects seem to be swallowed up in this his idol. His family, friends, interest, health, morality, his religion, his all that he can hope for here and hereafter, are renounced for this the sole object of his heart. Be intreated, my erring fellow-mortals, to renounce this idol, and set up one in your hearts that is more worthy of your homage and love.

In the next place, a number of arguments will be used, to persuade all the sober and temperate part of the community to join in aid of so benevolent a cause. If the consequences of excessive indulgence in strong drink have been justly described in what

has been said in the above remarks, we should think that there would be no need of any arguments to convince them of their duty. But the contrary of this is the fact. What is the cause that this Society is so few in numbers? Is the work we are engaged in a wicked work? Can it be wrong to discourage vicious, and promote virtuous, habits? Do not the sober and correct portion of the community feel the same zeal in encouraging this all-important object? Have we who are its members erred in the methods we have taken to discountenance this vice? If this be the case, join with us, and by your counsel and assistance point out some method which will better promote this great object; one that is less offensive, and will do the most good in the mildest way. If the course we are pursuing is thought to be imperfect, and a better one can be proposed, there is no one who will oppose it. No one will pretend that those who have the management of the concerns of this Society are actuated by selfish motives. They aim to treat those, who are the victims of this degrading vice, with all tenderness and delicacy; it is with a single eye to their happiness that they engage in this unpleasant duty. Yet it is apparent that its members, and those among the most deserving, have been subjected to reproach and calumny. But it is good to suffer "always in a good cause." I trust this will be their consolation. Does a fear of losing popularity deter any from aiding in this cause? Where is the man, who has any moral principle, who has any desire to see the cause of virtue triumphant and vice discountenanced, that will shrink from his duty? There is none! What have you to fear from those who are devoid of these principles?

Another argument that may be used, is the obvious one, that numbers add weight and respectability to an institution. It is impossible for a few individuals to produce that effect on the public mind, and

bring about that reformation, that would result from a more general combination of all the steady and sober part of the community. It has been an objection with many sober and temperate persons, that they did not feel able to conform to all the restraints the constitution of this Society imposes. This plea has no solid foundation. It is not expected in the present state of society, that the temperate and prudent, those who know how to use ardent spirit without abusing it, will be precluded in cases of necessity from using it with discretion. Those who have imbibed this notion, are certainly misinformed as to the motives, or misconceive the object, which govern the Society. We wish to restrain the use of ardent spirit within the bounds of reason and moderation. We wish to prevent the abuse, not the use, of this article. Neither do we intend to deny the sober, industrious, hard-labouring man, who gets his bread by the "sweat of his brow," from its use on all proper occasions. To convince my hearers the above assertions are correct, and are in conformity with the views and intentions of this Society, I will read extracts from our constitution.

Article 9th, it says, "the members of this Society agree, that they will not furnish or give ardent spirits to the men they employ, except with *cautious prudence*." Article 10th, it says, "the members of this Society agree, that they will endeavour to exert a prudent influence in checking intemperance and other kindred vices."

Where is the man that would not subscribe to such rules as these? Where is the man, who professes to be governed by the principles of morality, that does not act up to these extracts from our constitution? Be persuaded then, my friends, to subscribe your names with ours; as I am convinced that your principles and feelings dictate the course we are pursuing. Add your weight and influence

to so good a cause, and I feel confident it will be triumphant.

A few observations that naturally arise from a review of the subject will close.

When we compare the privileges and blessings, both of a civil and religious nature, which these United States enjoy, with those of any other nation of which we have any knowledge, we have reason to thank God, that our lot has fallen in so "pleasant a land," that we have so "goodly a heritage." Where is the nation that can boast of a form of government so perfect, of laws so happily combined and digested, and so well calculated to secure the rights and privileges of its citizens? Where is the nation that secures the rights of conscience to its subjects with so little restraint as our own? We require no conformity to any particular creed as a passport to offices of honour, or trust; we have no sect or party of Christians, that have the right or the means of persecuting us. But, thank God! in this land of liberty, light and knowledge, we are permitted to worship him, according to the dictates of our own consciences, without any to molest or make us afraid. But notwithstanding we possess all these rich and invaluable blessings, we are more inclined to habits of intemperance than any other nation. The followers of Mahomet, who embrace a great proportion of the world, are remarkable for their abstinence from this vice. Shall America, the boasted land of liberty and order, the country where light and knowledge are more generally diffused than in any other nation under heaven, be surpassed in this cardinal virtue by the followers of this pretended prophet? It is a melancholy fact, that many other nations, who fall far below us in the standard of morality in other respects, are much more free from this particular vice. I hope that the efforts that are making, by the wise, the benevolent, and good, will check this growing evil.



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We would call on the respectable Innholders and Retailers of Spirit, in this town, to use their influence in deterring those of our fellow citizens who are so unfortunate as to be the slaves of this cruel master. It affords me satisfaction, that I am enabled to say, that this class of our citizens in general are men of correct habits; men of temperance and sobriety; men who would not encourage this vice, or any others equally disgraceful that are frequently connected with it. I can with pleasure say, that I have seen the intemperate man denied spirit, in many instances, where the retailer was convinced he would make an improper use of it. They had rather lose their custom, than ruin their estates and reputation. These are noble instances, where principle overcomes feelings of sordid gain. May they become general, and much will be done by that class of our citizens, who have it in their power to effect more, in restraining this vice, than any other portion of the community.

In conclusion, permit me to adduce one motive more to deter from this debasing vice; and that is the powerful and sacred one, that it contradicts the plainest declarations of God's holy word. The bible frequently inculcates the virtues of temperance and sobriety, and as expressly discountenances the vice of ebriety. Some of its passages are couched in strong and alarming language; and positively declare, "that no drunkard shall enter into the kingdom of heaven." The same sacred book as pointedly affirms, that the unhappy victims of this sin will hereafter have to give an account, when "the works of all men will be made manifest," why they have departed from his written requirements. How awfully solemn the thought to those who have become established in this vicious habit! May God of his infinite mercy convince them of their danger, and aid them in escaping from the wrath to come!—But it

is painful to dwell on a subject that is so tremendously alarming to the man of evil habits; I would rather persuade them by the love and mercy of God, than alarm them by his threatenings, for he is abundantly merciful, "slow to anger," "not willing that any should perish," but that "all men every where" should forsake their evil habits, and love and serve Him. Be entreated then, my erring fellow mortals, to break from this vice, which defaces and disfigures the fair form that bears the impress of your Maker, and brings you too near in your resemblance to the irrational creation; which destroys the most vigorous and hale constitution, and ruins the most shining and promising intellectual powers; which, in fine, renders you a by-word and reproach, and sets you up as a mark, at which the finger of scorn and contempt is continually pointing.